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About the Author

Gene Berryman has Emceed many types of events in the last twenty years.

Gene says, "I was dropped into being the Emcee at my first event when the regular person became unavailable at the last minute."

"It was a trial by fire which I still remember. After that, I always wanted to prepare a guide based on my experiences for people that might find themselves in a similar situation."

"I've also helped many people who have either been asked to Emcee an event or want to work as a professional Emcee."

"I kept that first experience in mind when I started to write this book. I also covered many of the questions I was asked during the years since by people who asked for my help because they had to Emcee an event or wanted to work as a professional Emcee."

"The Emcee's role can be very demanding, especially when you are just starting. But, you have to do it well even when you are doing it for the first time."

"My book will give all the readers simple, proven tips and strategies to handle the special requirements of the role of an Emcee."

"People may think that the Emcee's duties are easy to do but they soon learn differently when they are asked to do it themselves."

"I've given readers the best practical tips I've learned so that they can start out the right way. You can use my book to help yourself reach a professional standard much more quickly and smoothly than learning from experience."

A good Emcee will always be in demand and these techniques will also help you deal with people in all areas of your life.

This is an equal opportunity area; it doesn't matter whether you are male or female. You just have to be good.

Gene's book is the one he wished he had when he started.

Introduction

This book will help you to be an Emcee or Compere for any sort of program.

I've written my book to help you make a good impression the first time and every time you pick up a microphone.

My first experience of being an Emcee or Master of Ceremonies came when the owner of the business I've worked for asked me to be an Emcee for a work-related function.

Actually, I was as much a volunteer as a soldier in the army when their Sergeant asked them to do something.

I knew that my future with that company would be affected for better or worse by my performance at that company function.

Since that time, I have talked with many people who have had similar experiences; some had to Emcee a business or club function while others were asked to Emcee a family wedding or other celebration.

That was the reason I wrote this book.

The Master of Ceremonies is critical to the success of a function.

It may seem to be easy task when you see a good Emcee at work.

But, there are many traps for the unwary.

The information I give you here will help you to avoid many of them and some of the best ways to deal with them when they can't be avoided.

This book focuses on being a good Master of Ceremonies. But, you will find other opportunities being offered to you in related areas when people see the professionalism you show as an Emcee.

So, I will include some suggestions which will also be helpful when you get other related work.

What is an Emcee?

A Master of Ceremonies is also known as a Compere or an Emcee. For brevity, I will use the term Emcee in this book.

Originally, a Compere had an expanded role. They interacted with the audience and also may have done a short routine with some of the performers after their presentations. This is the role of the Ringmaster in many modern circuses.

Some comperes also performed their own short routines.

But, the usual brief for an Emcee is to keep the audience's attention focused on the presenters. The Emcee needs to have their full attention on controlling the flow of the whole program and ensuring that it all goes smoothly. When you have done your first few bookings, you will realize that the Emcee has plenty to do and a lot of personal responsibility.

He or she is what holds everything together.

Every Emcee does their work in their own personal and individual style, but they all focus on ensuring that everyone in the audience enjoys the experience while getting a good impression of all the presenters and the organization which presents the program.

An Emcee has similar responsibilities to a Stage Manager. They keep the program to time, ensure that the presenters are introduced and thanked and that the audience is not disappointed.

An Emcee may have the ability and experience to be a presenter. That can be valuable, but their focus is on keeping the program running smoothly and creating a good experience for the audience.

But, having some knowledge and being able to perform can be useful too if there is an unexpected delay between presentations. Then, it may be appropriate for the Emcee to entertain for a few minutes if they can do something which is of suitable quality and appropriate to the event.

But, they must never try to upstage the featured presentations.

What an Emcee Does

The task you have as an Emcee is similar to that of the guide on a tourist bus.

You have to gain the confidence and interest of the people you are guiding through your program and ensure that they enjoy every part of the journey.



You must always remember that you are not the reason that they came to the event. You are there mainly help them to get the maximum enjoyment from their time with the presenters. They are the real attractions.

When the event is about to start, you welcome the guests (audience) and remind them of the reason for the event and possibly mention some of the highlights they can look forward to in the program that they will see.

Sometimes, you will also have some special announcements for the audience from the organizers.

Then, you introduce each presenter and leave the stage when they are ready to start.

While the audience is focusing on the presentation, you check your running sheet so that you know when that presentation is due to finish.

You check that the next presenter is near the stage and ready to start when introduced. You ensure they have no last-minute problems or require any changes in the way they will be introduced.

You also need to listen to each presentation. You need to find something in each which you can mention when you thank the presenter before they leave the stage.

The emcee is like the frame which holds a great picture in place. You are not the focus of attention but the whole thing might collapse if you do not do your job.

Getting Work



As I wrote before, you can expect to work a lot of free events before people start offering you reasonable money.

Few organizations will risk using an inexperienced Emcee for an important event because the Emcee is so critical to the success of the whole event.

You should look for work in related areas when you are just starting. That could include weddings and other celebrations and fundraisers.

If you do not have experience of dealing with people face-to-face, some sort of sales work could also help. Demonstration sales (spruiking) at exhibitions, shopping centers and markets will quickly improve your ability to deal with people of all types or put you off that sort of work forever.

You can contact agents who represent local entertainers. Hotels and conference centers can help you contact organizations and conference organizers but they will all want some evidence that you have done some Emcee work and got good reactions.

You can invite them to send someone to an event where you are the Emcee, with you paying all the costs involved.

When you are asked to provide promotional material to an agent or an organization, you will have to provide them with material which does not have your direct contact details on it.

Your representatives will put their contact details on the materials and the payments will go to them. They will forward the balance to you after deducting their commission.

If an agent or function organizer got a booking for you, you must ensure that you only give out the cards or other material which has their contact details on it at that event. Do not tell anyone there your direct contact information.

Weddings and other Events

Weddings and fundraisers are easier to get Emcee work at when you have limited experience.

However, they should be given your best efforts as they are obviously very important to the people concerned.



Your performance as an Emcee at a wedding will enhance or blight everyone's experience and memories of one of the most important days in the couple's lives!

That's a huge responsibility. But, it's important that you adopt a lighter and less formal approach while remaining as professional as you would for a major business event.

You should ensure that you do not overshadow any of the people who take part in the program.

You should be ready to assist anyone that needs encouragement or any kind of assistance to complete the task assigned to them.

These people are making speeches or proposing or responding to Toasts. That is a rare and important happening in their lives. Some will be scared and may even be physically ill.

A calm and supportive Emcee can help to ensure that everything goes well.

As well as conducting the formal program, you will help the various groups among the guests to mingle and ensure, as far as possible, no-one feels isolated from any part of the festivities.

You must check about any significant ethnic, religious or other requirements which you need to keep in mind at the event.

The guests may vary widely in their age, ethnicity, background and interests. Many may know only the group which they came with and not find it easy to connect with other guests.

Some will probably celebrate the occasion with too much food or (more likely) drink.

Weddings may take as much work to prepare for as a medium sized business event but the fee will probably be a lot lower.

You will need to consult with the Wedding Organizer if they have one.

Otherwise, you will consult the couple and then check with:

- Their friends and family that will be part of the program
- The venue staff
- Any entertainers or other people outside the families who will be involved in the program, and
- The person who will be officiating at the ceremony if they will be among the guests at the reception.

You may be invited to eat during the reception but this can cause problems with the timing of parts of the program and your ability to control the flow.

Drink only water and make sure it is at room temperature. Chilled water can affect the quality of your voice for a while.

Every couple wants their wedding reception to be unique and full of happy memories.

A professional Emcee can help to ensure that happens.

You will need to watch the mood of the various groups as the event progresses. The energy and interest level of people will rise and fall.

You must be ready to step in to bring them up when needed to ensure that the atmosphere keeps to as bright and happy level as possible.

Just give each event the same level of commitment you wanted from the Emcee at your own Wedding.

Every couple that does you the honor of letting you be part of their most important day deserves that.

Dealing with Stage Fright!

"The only thing you should worry about is whether the check will clear!" – Anon

As an Emcee, you need to appear confident and in control all the time. That will help to keep the presenters and the audience in the right mood and is likely to impress the people that booked you.

If you show the symptoms of stage fright, such as trembling, sweating or a stomach upset, it could seriously affect your future prospects.



Stage fright is the main problem for inexperienced Emcees and presenters. A friend described it as being like a bunch of butterflies as big as buffaloes in his stomach.

It doesn't ever completely disappear, but experience and these suggestions can help to lessen its effects.

But, you should not be concerned if you continue to feel a slight buzz before starting your work. That's common for every performer and can be channeled to good effect in your work.

Preparation: Good preparation will help you avoid many problems. People that, for whatever reason, are unsure of their ability or their readiness to do the presentation, will continue to suffer.

The effect will be magnified because their uncertainty will be transmitted to and unsettle their audience.

Desire for Perfection: Some people worry because their presentation or knowledge of the material is not perfect.

This may just be an excuse to mask a lack of confidence in their own ability or a desire to delay the performance of the task which they have been given.

But, of course, nobody is so important that a scheduled event will be delayed until they feel ready.



Almost every presentation can be improved but the only way to really add that professional polish is to do it in front of a live audience. Bob Hope said once that he regretted the disappearance of a lot of variety shows because they had given new performers "somewhere to be bad". He was not being arrogant but reminding us that only performances in front of live audiences will put a professional polish on any presentation. That's why many television shows are still performed and recorded in front of a live audience.

Remember that no-one is perfect. If you always do your preparation and give your best effort, you will do well.

The best way to minimize stage fright is to focus on making sure, as far as you are able, that your audience enjoy the event and every presenter is well received.

When that result is achieved, you have done your job.

Putting your focus outward toward the audience instead of inward to your own feelings can help enormously. As you start to have some successful events, your self-esteem will build a barrier between you and your earlier doubts.

There are a number of other things which can also be a great help to you.

But, the first things which many people resort to (drugs and alcohol) are the least effective and can, of course, make the problem much worse.

Even a little alcohol can affect your ability to be at your best. Alcohol is actually a depressant, especially when taken in excess.

That doesn't mean you might not have a drink as a celebration after a good presentation. However, remember that you are probably still being watched by members of the audience or the organizers. You are always advertising your business because You are Your Product.

Stress and Pressure

The best advice I got about dealing with stress was that I needed to understand where the stress was coming from. Stress is your mind's reaction to real or imagined pressure which is put on you.

The pressure is often less damaging than our reaction to it can be.

If we present ourselves and our material well, there is little need to worry about pressure from the people around us.

When we prepare our material, our body and our mind for the event, we are well on the way to reducing stage fright and other stresses which could affect our performance.

Avoid Talking Down to Yourself

If you tell yourself that you are worried or less prepared than you need to be, you will increase your stress level and that will definitely affect you, the event and the audience.

Avoid putting negative thoughts into your head. Tell yourself that you are prepared and capable of handling everything you will be called on to do.

Remember other challenges which you have faced and overcome. As you become more experienced as an Emcee, you can use your own successes in this area to keep your self-confidence high.

Just knowing that you are not the center of the audience's attention, despite the importance of what you do, can also help.

Mental Reinforcement

I firmly believe in positive thinking when it is coupled with proper preparation.

I was not convinced about the value of visualization until I learned that many top sports people used it regularly to reinforce the benefits which they get from their heavy training schedule.

As well as constantly practicing each stroke or movement they use in their sport, many champions play mind movies before a contest. They picture themselves performing each move perfectly in the looming competition.

The practice and the mental reinforcement are both important to their continuing success. It works for them, and for singers and other performers that I know personally, so I can only suggest that you give the idea a sincere effort.

Giving Your Best Performance

There are a lot of factors which contribute to a good performance of any kind. We need to be at our best in every area to give our best possible effort as an Emcee or in any other capacity.

That includes a number of things which we don't realize may need attention.

Three areas which I found that I could improve without much effort were my breathing, level of fitness and posture.

Learn to Breathe

One thing which I've noticed with many speakers is that they become short of breath after talking for only a short time. This can seriously reduce the effect of what they say to the audience.

Sometimes, there is a medical reason for this problem occurring. In those circumstances, I suggest that you ask your doctor about it as soon as possible so that you can get treatment for the problem if it is needed.

For the rest of us, the two most likely reasons are a lack of general fitness or bad habits which we have developed that reduce the amount of oxygen we draw into our bodies.

Breathing is something we all think we do well. But, many of us are just getting along and breathing much less efficiently than we could.

Yes, that does affect the quality of our lives even when we are not required to do anything very strenuous.

Some of us have almost stopped breathing through our mouths. We don't open our mouths enough to pronounce some words clearly.

This can also make us sound more nasal because we expel more air through our nasal passages.

A few weeks of focusing on opening and shaping our mouths as we speak can help to remedy the poor impression which a nasal voice can create.

Also, many people only exist take short, shallow breaths into their bodies. This limits the amount of oxygen available to them.

Deep breathing is much better for us and it is usually easy to improve our breathing over a few weeks if we make a conscious and sustained effort.

To test your own breathing, place the fingers of both hands gently on your stomach as you take a few normal breaths.

Don't make any special effort because that would just ruin the test and mask any problem, if there is one.

If your stomach does not rise or expand, then you have probably become a shallow breather. This is very common and linked to other bad habits like poor posture. So, you can probably benefit your general health by starting to focus on your breath and consciously draw it a little deeper into your body.

When you draw more air in, your body can harvest more oxygen to circulate through your bloodstream.

You probably won't notice much difference because overcoming the bad habits which you spent years developing will be slow and the amount of extra oxygen is fairly small. But, the benefits will come in time.

Exercise

Being an Emcee requires periods of concentrated effort while appearing relaxed and confident. That can only be done if we look after our general health and follow some form of regular exercise to maintain our bodies at the best possible fitness level.

The first step must be to have a thorough medical checkup and to have any problems which are found treated properly and promptly. Then, decide what sort of exercise program is best for you. You want something which is a good fit for your current lifestyle so that you will stick to it. This will become easier when you start to see some benefits from the program.

A gym membership might suit you if the level of fees are not a problem. The professional advice and access to quality equipment are probably worth the cost, but you will find that you have to remain focused or you will be another of the large percentage that don't go regularly enough and end up wasting their money.

If you are confident that you can get good results with a less structured program, you can save money by combining regular sport or physical exercise like running or bicycling with exercise sessions in your own home at least four days a week.

This avoids the need to travel to the gym regularly but requires just as much will power to keep you exercising. Once you begin to see and feel the improvement in your general health, it should be a bit easier to maintain your chosen program.

Posture

Your posture will obviously have an effect on the impression which the audience and the organizers get of you, but it is also a significant factor in how well you can present yourself and perform your duties as an Emcee.

If your general health is good, you may not notice any problems with how you usually stand or move about. But, when you are on a platform, you can be sure that everyone who is watching will notice any negative points, even if they are some distance away from you.

Here is a simple exercise which may help.

Stand with your feet slightly apart and your knees slightly bent.

Just imagine for a moment that there is a strong, invisible cord fixed to the center of the top of your head.

Now, imagine that the cord is being drawn steadily upward.

Keep your eyes focused straight ahead.

Let your head rise slightly and feel your back straighten.

Do this twice a day for a couple of weeks and you will start to automatically adopt a better stance. This may also improve your walking style over time.

The other thing, which may benefit your posture and breathing, is to check how you sit in a chair. Many people slump forward which can compress their chest and restrict the amount of air which they breathe in.

If you keep your back straight and your feet flat on the floor, you will breathe better and also present the best image to anyone that is watching you.

If your chair is adjustable, set the level of the seat so that your legs are bent at a right angle at the knee.



Presenting You!

An Emcee's product is their public persona. You are your Product!

You need to maintain your health, appearance and social skills at a high level.



Your ability to get more work can be affected by any of your social or business activities.

You must remember that you are a walking, talking advertisement for your business at all times when you are with any other people or in their view. Yes, even when you are alone, walking the dog or cycling in the countryside.

How you present yourself when you are working at any sort of event, however small, can also have an effect on the sort of bookings which you may be offered in the future.

Always give your best efforts, whether the audience is big or small and the fee is exciting or non-existent.

And keep in mind that you are showing your brand, even when you are not working.

Improving Your Personal Skills

Three of the most important qualities which every great Emcee has are reliability, proven ability and the ability to communicate well with all kinds of people.

If you want to improve your communication skills, you might benefit by reading some basic texts about Body Language and Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP).

The supporters of Body Language claim that almost anyone can learn to get past what people say and know what they really mean by reading some

unconscious physical signals which we all generate but do not actually control.

Although some people claim to have got excellent results after a lot of practise, not everyone does equally well, however careful they are. But, I found that trying some of the suggestions required me to pay closer attention to the people I was talking with and listening to. They usually responded well to the greater attention I gave them by listening more closely to me. So, I found the experiments valuable but the theories not reliable enough for constant use.

Neuro Linguistic Programming is more complex. It is claimed to help us by replacing poor behaviors with better, more successful ones which are based on those of people who are more successful in the particular task we are trying to do.

It focuses on the best processes and many presenters have reported good results with it. N.L.P. provides many techniques which may help you. They all need some thought and practise. There are no instant fixes.

Remember that You Represent the Organization

Although your work as the Emcee at a particular event does not mean that you are an employee of the organization which is putting it on, many people will think of you as a representative of that organization.

You must always be aware that anything you say or do when you are in the area of the venue from when the event is being set up until the last delegate has departed, may reflect either positively or negatively on the reputation of the organization.

Clothing and Accessories

The best suggestion which I was given was that, as a minimum, the Emcee should be clothed to the standard of the best of the professional presenters in the program. This will usually be as good as the most well-tailored in your audience.

There is no value in wearing anything too fancy – leave that to the more extreme entertainers.

It is my experience that women are usually far more comfortable and knowledgeable about what clothing suits them and the occasion than men.

But, men should be aware that this is one time that your spouse is unlikely to be able to counsel you, unless they have considerable experience in the up-market clothing trade.



There is also the possibility that they will be reluctant to suggest changes to anything that you want to wear because it might hurt your feelings.

To ensure that you get reliable up-to-date advice, it's best to ask the professionals if you are unsure about what you should wear.

Get help from the best of the clothing stores in your local area. Check a few places and make sure that you buy where you get the best advice.

Spending your money there will help you to build up a relationship with that store. As you and the staff you consult get to know each other better, you will find the advice will be more closely tailored to your needs.

So, you will get even better results as time goes on.

The same applies to your footwear and your hairdressing. Stick to one quality source and you will build some valuable relationships as well as getting good advice.

You can check the quality of the advice you get by seeing what other Emcees and the presenters are wearing. Checking the style magazines will help you to know what new trends are coming. But, you don't want your clothes to be what audiences remember about you.

Carry your clothes in a quality clothes carrier. Put them on just before you enter the room where you will be the Emcee.

Avoid sitting down in those clothes unless you have to during part of the event.

These clothes should be carefully cleaned after each event and packed away ready for the next one.

This will ensure that you always have the right gear available. If you took the risk of wearing your "event" clothes to any private functions you attended and they were stained or otherwise damaged, you might not be able to get repairs or suitable replacements in time for your next event.

Another advantage of having clothes which are only used for your work as an Emcee is that you might be able to claim their cost and upkeep as a tax deduction.

Unless you get specific instructions to wear less formal gear, you should wear jacket and tie which are of appropriate quality.

I stick to black or dark blue as being the most common colors for the Emcee. The presenters and guests have much wider leeway, of course.

Humor

Humor should appear off-the-cuff. But, the best way to achieve that effect is to rehearse every word and gesture thoroughly.

The first rule for an emcee is to remember that they are not there to entertain. You are expected to gain the interest and confidence of the audience and the presenters. You should show a sense of humor but leave most of the jokes to the presenters.

Make sure that any remarks that you make are relevant to the event, inoffensive and upbeat.

The only person that should be the butt of any joke that you do is yourself. Actually, many great comedians have built their careers on that tactic.

You are unlikely to upset anyone if you are the target. It's a subtle way of getting them to like you. But, like any humor, it requires careful planning.

Even if it seems appropriate to the event, you should avoid using a joke which you heard recently on television or radio. It is likely that many in the audience have also heard that one and you will lose one of the entertainer's most valuable weapons – the element of surprise.

Joke books are also only of limited value. They vary greatly in quality. You could make good use of them to get the skeleton of a story which you can build into something with particular relevance to the event you are at.

The only books I can recommend to you are those of former Bob Hope comedy writer, Gene Perret, who writes books to help comedians but has also written books about using comedy in business, including one called "Business Humor".

If you think you would enjoy being a comedian, you could work up a routine and look for somewhere to perform it.

But, it will be like starting again as you would probably be working for little more than the experience until you began to get some good feedback for your new type of work.

I say this because it is the truth. But, if you understand the odds you face, keep focused and act on your desire, you may have the determination you will surely need to make a success of one of the toughest areas of entertainment.

There are some emcees that are known for their use of comedy but it is not easy to make your mark this way.

If you get a great response to some joke you use, try to go to your introduction of the next segment rather than using any more of your own material at that point. The audience will probably respond very well to the next presenter because of the after-effect of your joke. The presenter is also likely to appreciate how well you have prepared the audience for them.

There is often a temptation to tell stories which involve some people in the organization who are attending the event.

But, avoid in-jokes which will only interest the people who actually know those individuals, because that material might annoy or even alienate many of the other people in the audience who do not have that knowledge or connection.

Tips and Techniques

In this chapter, I will include the best suggestions I have learned from experience and from my colleagues on small and large matters which don't easily fit into the other chapters of my ebook.

Announcements

As the Emcee, you will sometimes be required to make announcements to the audience on behalf of the organizers.

Always arrange that a single person has the responsibility of checking and approving all notices which you are to announce. That person should show you how they will initial each notice they approve before the sheets are delivered to you.

This will avoid the possibility of any mis-information being passed on or somebody being embarrassed if someone tries to get you to read out a false notice which they made up as a joke.

Style

When you have gained some experience, you will get good feedback on your work and referrals to other bookers. Then, you should think about developing different types of presentations for different types of events.

That is a really good idea if you are in an area where opportunities for emcees are limited. Being versatile and having some good testimonials can help you to get work from people that have not yet seen you in action.

But, it is important that you maintain a consistent style for each appearance you make between presenters at any one event.

If you change your approach with your different introductions, you will reduce the effect you have carefully built as the event proceeds.

Pacing Your Words.

It is fairly common for inexperienced speakers, including emcees, to talk a bit faster when they are on a platform than they do in the street.

I have also heard some that speed up when they don't get a good reaction to something they tell their audience. I am not sure what makes them do that but it is likely to reduce their connection with the audience.

I cannot see an advantage they might get from it.

When you start speaking, focus on speaking at a pace which lets your audience hear every word clearly so that everyone can understand and enjoy everything which you say.

Preparing for an Event

The work you do at the event is like the tip of an iceberg.

There is a great deal of other work when you are getting ready before the day of the event.

When you have got confirmation that you are booked, you need to start preparing to make the best possible impression on everyone involved so that you have a good chance to be booked for their future events.

Bookers don't just book on the basis of your on-stage work, although that is a very important consideration.

They also consider how well you worked with the presenters, the staff at the venue and, especially, the organizers themselves.

If you caused them no problems and left a great impression of yourself as a person as well as an Emcee, you should have a good chance of getting more work from them.

Your Emergency Kit

As well as your clothing for the event, you should carry an emergency kit that contains sundry but important items which prevent small problems that might occur during the presentations becoming major disasters.

You probably won't want to carry everything that I have listed in this section. I don't do that myself.

I have included here just about everything that you might need at some time. Some of them will be obvious to you but you may not have thought of some of the others. There might be something there which could save you a serious problem at some time.

I will leave it to you to decide which items you will always carry in your kit.

I carry my kit in a durable and flexible toiletries bag. Some people use a plastic box but I have found it easier to fit the soft-sided bag into my case.

The first thing I taped inside the top of this bag is a list of the items which are supposed to be in my kit.

Although I have done this sort of work for many years and I usually carry the same bits and pieces, I go carefully through my list when I pack the bag. This avoids the possibility that I could assume something is included and find out, too late, that I left it at home or in my office.

Then, I put in a large plastic envelope with copies of all the paperwork I prepared for the event.

Here is my list of items which you might want to carry with you.

Sewing kit. Black and white buttons with matching thread. Make sure that your kit contains a needle threader (which will make threading a needle much quicker) and a couple of thimbles. If you have to sew a button back on, always use a thimble or put an adhesive Band Aid around the tip of your finger to protect it from being pierced by the needle. You don't want to go on stage with blood on your clothing or a bandage on your hand.

Headache tablets – use them sparingly.

Warning: It is illegal in many countries to give anyone pain relief or other drugs unless you are qualified to dispense them or selling them from a shop. Don't take any chances on this. You will probably be asked for them at times. You should always apologize that you cannot, under law, help directly and ask them to contact the organizer or the hotel's reception who will be able to direct them to a druggist or other legal source.

Mints, breath freshener spray, throat lozenges.

Adhesive plasters (good quality, such as Band Aids®).

Facial wipes and tissues.

Eye drops. Do not share eye drops with anyone.

White and black marking pens for covering scratches on equipment. Offer it only to owners of the gear for them to use.

You can get paper clips covered in black, white or colored plastic at most stationery stores. They can be used to hold both sides of a button-hole together if someone loses a cufflink or a button and there is no suitable alternative available.

Sunscreen (if the program will be held outdoors).

Small cosmetic mirror with two sides (one normal and one magnifying).

Spare watch set to the current time. Time keeping is a vital part of your duties and you need a backup watch in case something, like a fading battery, happens to your usual one.

New spare batteries for anything which is battery powered.

Copies of all relevant paperwork; run sheets, contact numbers for everyone responsible for any part of the event and mobile numbers for those who are involved in the actual running of the event.

Small flashlight and new batteries.

Set of small screwdrivers.

Small pliers.

Repair kit for eyeglasses.

Adhesive tape.

Blu Tack[®] (or equivalent); a re-usable adhesive which resembles putty.

Flatten a small piece and press it against any dry surface to hold a piece of paper or a trailing electrical wire in place.

An Emcee in Action

In this chapter, I try to give you a broad overview of working as the Emcee. Of course, every event is different because of the circumstances, audience and other factors. But, this will help you to understand the basics of an Emcee's work.

You have some important duties before you appear in front of this audience for the first time.

Check with the people that are responsible for the back of stage equipment. You need to check the audio equipment before the audience enters the room.

Ask the person in charge of the equipment to let you do a sound check to ensure that your voice is clearly audible at various points around the room.

If there is a microphone on a stand, find out how to raise and lower it so that it can be adjusted to suit different presenters. You also need to know how to switch it on and off. Then, make sure that it is off between presentations.

Check whether the microphone is uni-directional (focused on mainly picking up sound which comes from directly in front of the head) or omni-directional (picks up sound from all directions)> The latter type may pick up conversations at the side of the stage when the people involved don't realize their words might be audible around the room.

Most venues have suitable equipment available for the organizations which hold events there to use. Some organizations get their Professional Conference Organizer to choose an outside specialist to provide the equipment and maintain it through the event.

If there are curtains which you come through onto the stage, be sure to check that you can easily open them, step through and close them behind you.

You need to check with the organizer about any last-minute changes, important guests who you should mention in your Introduction and any other matters which you need to be aware of or pass on to the audience.

Arrange with the organizer to have someone check any announcements which people want made from the stage before they get to you.

Confirm that all people that will be part of the stage presentations are present and ready to do their part when required.

Confirm with each presenter exactly how they want to be introduced and check whether there are any items or other help which they may need for their presentation.

Some presenters will have recorded introductions or music which is to be played during part of their presentations. Ensure that they arrange this with the person responsible for the sound system well before the program starts.

You will use a Running Sheet to keep track of all the various parts of the preparation and the actual program. This sheet is important enough to have its own Chapter. I will also give you an example of a running sheet which you can adapt for your own use.

Running Sheet

You will need two running sheets for each engagement.

One will be your personal one that includes everything you need to do and everywhere you need to be from your interview about the booking to the final wrap-up after the event is no more than a happy memory.

The other is for the program you will be Emcee for.

On that one, you will list the people you need to work with and report to and their contact details.

You will also list the times and locations when you will meet people, collect gear or do anything else related to your duties on the day of the function.

I suggest that you use the sample form on the next page to adapt for something which fits your own programs more closely.

You should print out a few copies of the final version and give them to the people working with you at the event.

It is common for alterations to be made to the program, sometimes more than once. Putting a large number at the top right of each version running sheet will ensure that everyone is using the latest.

You may use different color paper for each version but they still need to have a number and the time when they were released.

Check with the organizer and the venue staff that you can get access to a photocopier during the time you are at the room. It can be a real problem if you need last minute changes to the running sheet or other materials and their photocopier is locked up in the manager's office until the next morning.

If there is a meal served during the session, you or the organizer may arrange with the venue to have courses served and plates removed during natural breaks in the program to minimize disruption.

The Emcee may be invited to have a meal too but this should be gracefully declined. Eating will interfere with your ability to stay on top of everything to do with the program. You won't be able to enjoy the meal and it will impair your performance. Stay hungry and focused.

Managing the Program

As I mentioned earlier, remember that everything you do or say reflects on you and also on the organization which is holding the event.

Your actions and words must show them in a good light.

Your Introduction.

You will introduce each of the presenters that take part in the program.

But, you also need to consider how you will be introduced at the beginning of the program.

You may want to introduce yourself when you first go on stage after the audience is seated.

But, many believe that it is more effective to have someone else introduce you before you start.

You might ask someone involved in the program to read a short introduction which you prepare in advance. Please realize that it is a big ask because everybody involved is likely to be very busy with the things they are personally responsible for. So, take a politer refusal with good grace,

You could have it recorded beforehand and played through the sound system when you are about to appear on the stage or you could announce yourself from an off-stage microphone before you appear or wait until you are onstage.

This helps to get the audience to focus their attention on you and what you say. It gets them in the mood even before you open your mouth.

This is the method I use unless the organizer wants me to be introduced in a different way. You must always follow their lead.

If you use a recorded introduction, you should have it spoken by someone whose voice will impress the audience. You might get another speaker to record your introduction in return for you recording one for them.

Getting Started

Before you get on stage, check every part of your clothes and that you have everything you need with you.

Many emcees and speakers do a few breathing exercises before they go on stage. Try flexing your mouth by stretching your lips into a wide smile and then opening your mouth widely as if you were about to say "O".

Doing this several times can help with your speech and may increase the amount of air which you take in for each breath, giving your body a little more oxygen.

Always drink some water during the few hours before the event. This helps to keep your mouth lubricated and also provides the water which is essential for your body and especially your brain to operate at its best.

Don't substitute alcohol, juices or any drinks which contain caffeine or guarana (a natural stimulant related to caffeine) for plain water. They all cause your body to expel some of its stored water and they can have other negative effects on you.

Try to clear your mind of everything except the program you are about to present.

Some emcees keep their notes attached to a smart-looking clipboard, others prefer a stack of small cards or a single larger sheet of paper.

I use a clipboard which helps to reduce the possibility of your notes spilling out of your hand.

But, your smile must look natural and not overdone.

Walk confidently onto the platform. Put your notes on the lectern if there is one.

SMILE! I put extra emphasis on that word because a friendly appearance and manner is vital for you to make a firm connection with the audience.

Start by looking around the whole room. Some speakers and Emcees just focus on the same area or even the same person when they speak and that reduces their impact with the other people in the audience.

Use your introduction to welcome the audience, and tell them about the event.

You should mention:

- ✓ The organization which is holding the event, and
- ✓ The name of the event. I have seen a few people jump up at that point and leave the room to look for the other program being held in the same venue which they are actually supposed to be attending!

Then, you acknowledge the people that the organizers specify. That could include dignitaries, people that represent the organization or company which set up the event and representatives of the sponsors or major donors.

Explain the purpose of the event and what the audience will gain from it. Telling them the benefits which they get from being at this particular event is very important for establishing a firm connection between the audience and the event. Everybody needs to know WIIFM (What's In It For Me).

Now, you start the main program.

For each Speaker, you need to tell the audience:

- ✓ The Speaker's name (check pronunciation with them before the program starts, preferably at least the day before).
- ✓ The title of, and some basic information about, their presentation.
- ✓ Their qualifications (keep this brief).
- ✓ Any connection they have to the hosting organization
- ✓ Other relevant material, if required, such as the names of relevant books they have published and positions which they hold.

At some business events, the speakers will set up tables at the back of the room, or in another room nearby, where the audience can buy copies of their books and other products. You will mention these

arrangements either during your introduction or when you thank the presenter after they finish their talk.

Do not give the core points from the presenter's own talk in your introduction. Just give the audience enough general information or you will make it much harder for the presenter to have the effect they aim for on the audience.

You should stay close to the platform during each presentation. Listen for a couple of important points which you can mention when you thank them at the end of their presentation.

Give them plenty of time to enjoy their applause and leave the stage before you start your introduction for the next person.

In-between Time

The Emcee needs to organize some time between each presenter or item to allow for the next presenter to come on stage and any changes to be made to the furniture and equipment. Usually, five minutes before and after each presentation is enough.

You have to consult with everyone before writing up the first version of your run sheet.

Ask the backstage staff if they or a presenter needs some time to move equipment in or out between any of the segments or for any other reason.

Check with each presenter about any special requirements they have which may affect the program or the length of their segment.

The mark of a truly professional presenter is to keep to the time they say they need. The mark of a competent Emcee is to keep the program running to time when presenters don't keep to the time they say they need.

Finale

Most programs end with the featured presenter's segment. You may have to just go on stage for one last time and thank everyone for their presence and perhaps make some announcements on behalf of the organizers.

Mishaps.

If there is a minor technical problem, such as a blown lightbulb or a problem with the audio system, do not use it to make any sort of negative remark about the venue or the organization.

It can be embarrassing for them and can cause repercussions for you when they are thinking about who to book for future occasions.

Just apologize and thank everyone for their patience.

Remain calm and focused on the program you are there to present.

Emergencies

You should check with the organizer before the program starts about what directions you may need to give to the audience if there is an emergency.

They are rare but a real possibility and you will have some responsibility for the welfare of the audience and other people if one occurs when you are the Emcee.

Get instructions from them about what they want you to tell the audience, including the location of exits which should be used if they need to evacuate the room and who you should contact directly if something serious occurs.

If you are the person who has to give instructions to the audience, keep everything low-key.

Use short, clear and positive statements, such as, "Please stand up."

Thankyou."

"Could the back row go out through the back exit on their side of the room.

Then, could each row follow them. Please wait until the row of seats behind you is completely empty before starting to leave."

"There is plenty of time." ... and so on.

People respond better when the person talking to them stays calm and positive. Putting your requests or instructions in a positive form is believed to be more likely to work.

Interruptions

Latecomers

Although people that come in after the program has started can upset other people in the audience and cause some disruption to the mood which is being carefully built up, the emcee should remain calm and positive.

You cannot know why they are late. They may have good reasons for their late arrival.

They are part of the audience and have probably paid for their presence at the event. As paying guests, they should always be treated well.

If you make any jokes at their expense, you may upset their friends and colleagues in the audience as well. That will cause more negativity to build.

If you treat them courteously, you will create a good impression of the event and yourself. It will also reduce the length of the interruption to the program.

Remember the proven advice about jokes in general: "The only person that you should make the butt of any joke is yourself."

When you are on stage, you are in a position of power, so you may appear to be taking advantage of that superior position.

That can reduce the level of respect and desire to cooperate with you that you had built up until the interruption.

Hecklers

The heckler is a common problem which all emcees will have to manage at times.

Some are full of their self-endowed importance and others are usually full of alcohol.

You may be surprised when I suggest that you treat them lightly? I believe that focusing attention and negative comments on them will only increase the damage they can do to you and the program.

Don't take the heckling as a personal attack. It is almost always a grab for "thirty seconds of fame" by someone that is not likely to ever get any otherwise.

Be sympathetic but firm. Don't give them any oxygen (attention). When the rest of the audience follow your lead and ignore the outburst, they usually subside.

If they are highly disruptive, the audience members nearest to them usually settle the heckler quickly because they want to see the next presentation.

That is because I work very hard to create a good connection with the audience from the start of the program.

If I responded to the heckler with any sign of anger, I would not get that cooperation and would have to start to rebuild my relationship from the beginning.

Promoting Yourself

"It doesn't matter how good your Show if you don't do the business!" – *My Accountant*

Emcees don't have an apprenticeship scheme in any country as far as I am aware.

And, no-one is going to get someone to Emcee an event which may run from three hours to three days and have from fifty to one thousand guests if they don't have proven skills and testimonials.

So, expect to start small and build your business one dinner, wedding or convention at a time.

When you are getting good feedback and reasonable fees, you need to start promoting yourself and trying hard to catch the interest of bigger organizations with bigger events and budgets.

It is most important to start to do everything in an organized, professional manner right at the beginning. You must set up accounts for your expenses and income, contact lists, subscribe to magazines and bookmark websites related to the industries you are interested in working with.

Check your Yellow Pages and do some web searches. Look for national organizations and also local ones which are most likely to try someone with limited experience.

Business Cards



Business cards can be plain or fancy. I suggest that you look at samples in local printers. Several Emcees I know have had greater success since they started using business cards with their photo on them. That is usually a head and shoulders picture because of the limited space.

Get a Web Site

Promotion through newspaper classifieds and special supplements, the telephone directory and other media are also worth considering but the web site is probably the best investment I have made.



I suggest that you get your own web site. You could get one with your name if it is available, such as "joesmithers.com". Or, you could get a domain name which combines your type of business and your location such as "emceewoopwoop.com". **NOTE:** I just made these up and checked that they were not registered when this ebook was prepared. If they are registered when you read this, it is only a coincidence and there is no connection at all between them and me.

If you live in a very small town, you might use the name of a nearby city in your domain name, because there are likely to be many more events which you might work at in the city.

Having your own web site has some advantages over traditional forms of advertising.

The basic steps to putting your own web pages together and transferring them to your web domain are fairly easy to learn.

You could ask the eBookwholesaler Member who supplied this book to you about the related books they have available. They may even be able to help you find reliable, low-cost web hosting, someone who can set up your web site for you and other services.

I think having a web site to promote my business is the best idea I've had. Costs are low.

I can add more information and pictures to my web site at any time. I don't have to rely on people recognizing my five-year old picture or some from events which have faded from everyone's memories.

This is much better than an advertisement in a magazine or the phonebook. Once the advert is published on paper, it can't be changes for a month or a year. But, I can change anything on my web site anytime.

I can put a form on the site where people can enter their contact details and I can send them further information by email or post. And, I get their enquiry almost immediately.

You can set up your web site on some free space provided by some companies but that is false economy. That space will have advertising for that company and possibly other offers which you have no control over. It won't work for you because it won't look professional.

Pictures

You should get permission from the organizers if you want to use pictures you took at an event. If there are other people in the picture, you should get their written permission. If someone else took the picture, you should get their written permission, especially if they are a professional photographer.

Pictures of you which appear in any newspaper or other media can usually be obtained from that publication. You will need their specific permission for whatever type of use you want to make of the picture. Some will not allow pictures they have the rights to for use on the Internet. Always check first and get everything in writing.

Misuse of pictures or the images of other people can get you sued which will not enhance your reputation even if you win.

You can use the same picture and text style on your letterhead and your web site if you want to.

If you get a professional to take pictures of you, use someone that has experience of taking entertainers' pictures for promotional purposes. The average portrait photographer does not have the same mindset.

Pictures of you working in the sort of event you want to do more of are the most likely to get you noticed by the right people.

Always ask what rights you get for the pictures before you agree to use that photographer. You should get "All Rights". It will cost more but save you from future problems. Then, you can let the photographer put their watermark inconspicuously in one corner.

A one page information sheet is worthwhile. It may seem to be a simple task but take great care about it. This type of promotion is very easy to read and distribute around an organization or to other people when they want to recommend your services to them.

All of your promotional material should be accurate, even understated. No-one likes hype and bookers see far too much of it.

Keep your sentences short. Focus every word on explaining to your readers the most important benefits they will get by using you as their emcee.

They want to know that you will be a good ambassador for the hosting organization and will guarantee that their guests will all have a wonderful time.

Brochures are used by many Emcees and speakers but I think that your own web site is the best kind of brochure for you. You are not limited to the number of pages, pictures, testimonials or colors you can use.

If you join local business clubs, you may get some exposure at their local functions. That could be followed by referral to State conference organizers.

Dealing with Bookers

Professional Conference Organizers, or P.C.O.'s. are hired to set up and run entire conferences. They only deal with fairly big events and usually handle all arrangements including accommodation, travel arrangements and all the other things which are part of a modern business event.

They usually suggest talent to the company which will host the event because they have feedback from people that were involved with other events which they organized.

You will not get on their books until you are already earning significant fees and have a great set of testimonials and promotional material.

They can't afford to recommend anyone that is not a proven winner.

They are the organizations which handle the most expensive, prestigious and important business functions.

You need to cover many of the same points whether you are discussing a local event or a three day conference in some exotic resort. Just scale up or down.



Your Interview

Whatever type of event you are being considered for, you will have to be interviewed.

A lot of people shiver at the thought of any kind of interview. It's something you must not do in this area – if they see you cannot handle one-on-one, they are unlikely to trust that you can handle fifty or five hundred of their guests.

Preparation based on thorough research is the best protection you can have.

You need to find out in advance as much as you can about the company holding the event, their products and why the event is being done.

You don't need to recite this during the interview but it will help you work out the best responses to the questions you are asked.

You will ask questions too. They need to be focused on the client's objectives. The relevance and value of your questions will help the organizer to decide if you are the Emcee they want.

You need to know the:

Type of organization (Commercial, government, non-profit)?

Main products, services and objectives?

National or international?

Location of Head Office?

Do they Produce their own products?

How long in business?

How long in this Country?

Main competitors?

Their main products or services and any other significant details?

Prime objective the Client wants from the event?

Themes or goals which are being promoted at the event?

About the Event:

Location?

Schedule?

Travel arrangements?

Number of attendees?

Purpose of the event (Awards, product launch, sales conference, charity fundraiser)?

Attendees relationship to company (administrative staff, sales people, award winners, customers, distributors)?

Any partners of the above at the function(s) you will be Emceeding?

Names and titles or positions of senior staff and dignitaries who will be present?

Have there been any major changes in the company which have affected the attendees?

Are there any potential problems that may be worrying them?

Any major changes to be announced at the event?

Please supply any relevant printed material?

Who to contact if I have further questions after reading the material?

Any topics which should be avoided?

Who to contact if I have travel problems?

Who do I get my instructions from?

Who do I contact about matters related to the event when I reach the venue?

You will check with that person to get access to the room before the event, find out when to set up and so on.

NOTE: Some locations have strict rules about who can do certain jobs. You should check with an organizer if there are any restrictions on you moving

chairs, the lectern, shifting boxes or products, adjusting the curtains or the height of the microphone or any other equipment.

This can apply also if you get work in an exhibition hall demonstrating products or promoting something for a company.

Speaking Tips

I am including here a few tips which will help you when you are working as an Emcee but could be even more important when you are doing a presentation of any kind.

Keep to time. You need to keep to the time allowed for your presentation. You also need to be ready to speak at least ten minutes before you are scheduled. If your speech runs over time, you inconvenience the organizers, other speakers, catering staff and your audience.

Keep to Topic: Stick to the topic which you arranged to speak about. Don't try to cover too many points in your talk. Practise your speech so you know how long it takes. Good speakers usually take almost exactly the time they specified.

Avoid Controversy: Unless you have been booked to speak about a controversial or potentially inflammatory subject, avoid religion, politics and anything else which may cause offense.

Keep your Energy High: If you do not show enthusiasm for your subject, it's unlikely that you will get a great response from your audience.

Vary Your Tone: The worst kind of speaker is one that has command of his subject but has never practised his talk. They talk in a monotone which makes it very hard for the audience to keep interested.

Record Your Speech: Be prepared for a shock if you have not heard yourself in a recording before. We hear ourselves differently (from within our skull) to the way everyone else hears us. It can be very helpful.

Check the Microphone and Sound Level: You can either do this yourself or, if they are available and willing, the person responsible for the system may check it with you before the program starts.

Check that the microphone is on: Tap gently on the cap. Never blow into a microphone. That is unprofessional, unhygienic and may damage the equipment. After you finish your speech, don't say anything until you are out of range of the microphone.

Decide Your "Call to Action: Decide what is the main thing you want your audience to take from your speech. What do you want them to do? That is your "call to action". Keep that in mind while you are writing your speech. So that you remain focused. Remove anything in the draft of your speech which does not move them toward that goal. End the speech with your most powerful incentive for them to do what you suggest.

The Title of Your Speech is Important: The Title you give to your speech will probably appear in the program for the Event and be stated by the Emcee when he or she introduces you. It is as important for you as the headline on the front page is to a newspaper editor. When people are deciding whether to attend your session, it's the headline which has to drag them in unless you have a reputation or acknowledged expertise in a subject they are interested in. Write several titles – maybe fifty. Try to think what will best attract the audience based on the things which were used to attract them to the Event.

Take Care with Your Introduction: You should write your own introduction. Write it in BLOCK CAPITALS on a card for the Emcee. Leave some space between lines so it is easy to read. Tell them how to pronounce your name if there could be any doubt. Check with the Emcee about any other words which may be hard for them to pronounce. If they get anything wrong, just let it go rather than cause any fuss during the Event. Improve your explanation to the next Emcee you work with.

If You Answer Questions After Your Speech: Try to have a microphone taken to each person that asks a question. It's a good idea to repeat the question before giving your reply. That confirms that you understood the question and helps any audience members who may not have heard the question clearly.

Use Stories: Many speakers throw facts and figures at their audiences but these are never as persuasive as stories. If possible, put yourself or someone that the audience know and respect in the story (as long as it is true). This will strengthen their interest in your speech and the outcome you seek.

The Future is Here



I wrote about setting up your own web site to promote yourself and your services.

But that's just the start!

You can also use other web based services to your advantage. I regularly use a "Voice over Internet Phone" service called "Skype" to talk with bookers and other people around my country and in most other countries for much

less than calls through a regular landline would cost me.

I can also do video calls and even make video presentations.

All that is available now and new developments will probably be released by the time you read this.

That's exciting! That's cheap and getting cheaper.

It means your potential market for your Emcee services are almost unlimited.

The Best Job in Town

I believe that being an Emcee is a great choice for anyone that is willing to prepare and promote themselves.



The potential income is really up to you. You can travel to almost any part of your country or the world.

You could be staying in major resorts with all expenses paid, enjoying entertainment and informational presentation which would otherwise cost you a lot – all for free.

You will meet many experts and inspirational speakers.

There is little chance of becoming bored or stale because every event you work at will have a different atmosphere, objectives and people.

If you ever feel less enthusiastic than usual, you just need to remember that in every audience there is probably at least one person that is attending their first major event.

You can help that person to have the best possible experience and start to build their skills and knowledge for a brighter future.

And, you'll get paid to do it!

You just have to prepare yourself and take action!

I wish you great success and happiness!

Gene W. Berryman September 2010

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